DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 644 TM 021 051

AUTHOR Brown, M. Mae; And Others
TITLE External Evaluation of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' OSAP High Risk Youth Demonstration Program--Year Two.
PUB DATE Nov 93
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, November 10-12, 1993). For an earlier report, see ED 340 545.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *After School Programs; American Indians; Cultural Activities; Data Collection; Demonstration Programs; Early Intervention; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; Field Studies; *High Risk Students; Homework; Interviews; *Mississippi Band of Choctaw (Tribe); Parent Attitudes; *Prevention; Program Evaluation; Recreational Activities; Student Attitudes; *Substance Abuse; Tutoring
IDENTIFIERS External Evaluation; Mississippi

ABSTRACT

The OSAP High Risk Youth Demonstration Program of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is directed toward the prevention of substance abuse through experiences offered in an after-school program. This is the second year that the program has been implemented in the six elementary schools and one middle school of the Mississippi Choctaw reservation. In 1990-91, the project was designed to serve an estimated 610 students, although 710 were actually enrolled. The program included five components: (1) tutoring on homework; (2) drug education; (3) recreation; (4) snacks; and (5) cultural activities. The external evaluation included a review of activities, verification of data collection for internal evaluation, a review of the preceding evaluation, a summary of evaluator field visits, including interviews with teachers, principals, and parents in participating schools, and a report of observed strengths and weaknesses. In five of the seven schools, the program is being implemented with great fidelity to the model described in the funding proposal. Overall, the program is very effective. Although community substance abuse has not lessened, very few cases are found among the children. Parent and student attitudes toward the program are favorable. It is also apparent that a strong principal is the key to effective program functioning. (SLD)

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EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS' OSAP HIGH RISK YOUTH DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM - YEAR TWO

M. Mae Brown
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
Jimmie C. Fortune
Abbot L. Packard
Virginia Tech University

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M. Mae Brown
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
Jimmie C. Fortune
Abbot L. Packard
Virginia Tech University

Introduction

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' OSAP High Risk Youth Demonstration Program is directed toward the prevention of substance abuse through experiences offered in an after-school program. This is the second year that the program has been implemented in seven of the eight reservation schools, the six elementary schools and the middle school. The first year of this program allowed much of the implementation to be left up to each individual participating school. This effort was judged highly successful in that the project design permitted individual school programs to be tailored to the needs and differences in each school.

In 1990-91 the project was designed to serve an estimated group of 610 kindergarten through eighth grade students. The project, however, was so popular that year that 710 students enrolled and were served. The 1991-1992 program had at the time of the external evaluator's visit in mid May, 709 students enrolled. The general overall structure of the 1991-1992 project included five components common to all participating schools and most enrolled students. These components included: tutoring on homework; drug education; recreation; snacks; and cultural activities. All school programs were held after school four days per week, allowing the programs to serve a "latch-key" function that is liked by many parents. Many students expressed the idea that the program was "fun." Others benefited from the tutoring associated "homework", a component enjoyed by many parents of the older children. Still other children enjoyed the program because of the recreation and cultural activities. Hence, the project contained programs that included something to be liked by everyone. The notion of "responsive programming" appears to be a key in successful prevention programs. Certainly it is a key to the success of this one.

External Evaluator Responsibilities and Methodology

The responsibility of the external evaluator includes the verification of the quality control and operations components, and the advisory oversight of the internal evaluation. This external evaluation to the OSAP "after-school" program included the following:

1. A review of records and project activities;
2. A verification of the collection of data to be used in the internal evaluation of the project;
3. A review of the 1990-1991 final evaluation results;
4. A summary of evaluator field visits to each school;
5. A report of observed strengths and weaknesses; and

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7. Recommendations for future management action.

Many of the external evaluator activities involved reading archival data files, seeing if proposed data collection was taking place, verifying that reported project activities were actually occurring, and ethographically seeing if clients (parents and children) were satisfied with the project. The external evaluator sees if the project files contain what they are supposed to contain and sees if these files are being used as reported. Review of the collection of the evaluation data involved review of the instruments used to collect information and review of the methods through which the information was gathered and planned to be analyzed. The method used to verify project activities and to gather data on the field visits to each school was ethnographic interviews and the summary of results of reviews of the archives. From these methods follows the report on the strengths and weaknesses of the program; and the rendering of recommendations. The external evaluation efforts for the two years are similar except the second year involved only one project site visit.

Accountability

Records review. The external evaluator reviewed the records kept pertaining to program operation. These records included a program participation application forms for students; records of student attendance; records of student discipline referrals; staff rosters, menus of snacks; activity outlines collected weekly from the teachers in the schools; purchases of supplies, and other financial records. An audit trail has been developed for cost accounting.

Basic operations information including attendance and personnel information for both years are clear, comprehensive and accurate. Less staff turnover and a much lower percentage of student dropouts late in the year are occurring the second year. The second year program features 90% retention of enrollees in all schools except the middle school where band, cheerleading and spring sports compete. In this school it was nearly a 70% retention rate.

Verification of the Evaluation Data. This external evaluator was able to review the 1990-1991 results of data analysis conducted by Mississippi State staff. The evaluation and data analysis staff at Mississippi State is to be complimented for their exemplary performance as internal evaluators, given the emergency assumption of this role in 1990-1991. Overall as external evaluator I was very pleased at the quality of this work. The few comments I have are directed toward fine-tuning the 1991-1992 analysis.

The results of the Choctaw Picture Self-Concept test appear promising and the development effort on this instrument should continue. This effort should be increased due to the importance of the self-concept variable in the prevention process and the "apparently invalid" performance of the Tennessee Self-Concept

Scale (TSCS) with the Indian children. Problems with the TSCS are most likely environmental or cultural in that the scale assumes social interactions not present in the reservation setting.

The report on the Parent Interview Form (PIF) would be more helpful if presented by school. Response stubs on this instrument are "poor" and perhaps condescending. Due to the way parents tend to think about the word "poor" pertaining only to possession of wealth this seems to be an inappropriate term for a Likert scale and "ugh" may be "cute white society" terminology, but not Choctaw. Why use a Likert format if scaled scores are not to be analyzed?

The same response stub descriptors were also used on the child interview forms, most likely biasing the results from the negative. The finding that an increasing satisfaction with snacks occurs commensurate with the timing of short-change of snacks last year is puzzling. No shortage of snacks were observed for this second year.

The reported analysis of the Drug Education and Substance Abuse Form for 1990-1991 was very difficult to read and understand without sample cell sizes and percentages of response by stub. It appears that the drug education information was only partially effective. Teachers' remarks in two schools for the year 1991-1992 suggest better use of clearing house materials should be made.

Generally, I agree with the school dropout report, but there are a few misleading statements in the report. First, the out-migration from the reservation may not be consider minimum in many respects although the out-of-state migration is minimum. Over the period 1986 to 1990 in the Demographic Survey 97 students have been identified as leaving the reservation setting or leaving the reservation schools. Some of the 172 out-of-school youth reported in 1986 returned to school prior to the 1990 demographic survey. The dimension created by the maintenance of the dormitory is associated with dropouts, as well as the number who quit high school to work in tribal enterprises and attend adult education. The Choctaw dropout is a more complex problem that reflected in the report. The OSAP After School appears to have great potential in addressing the dropout problem.

Implementation

As part of the summative external evaluation for the program year 1990-1991, visits were made to each school and school personnel and after-school program personnel were interviewed. In some schools classes were observed and children were briefly interviewed. In all schools the principal was interviewed. In the 1991-1992 program year all schools were visited again by the external evaluator. The evaluator was able to attend one program social, a cook-out, and was able to observe classes in four

schools. Teachers, aides, parents and students were interviewed in four schools. Teachers, aides and parents were interviewed in a fifth school. Teachers and aides were interviewed in a sixth school. Six of the seven principals were interviewed.

Field Notes from School Visits

Standing Pine - The 1990-1991 report for Standing Pine went as follows. I talked to the principal, two aides and two teachers concerning the program. The program involves 52 children divided into four groups. The principal reports that the program is meeting a need in the community. All four group leaders (the two aides and the two teachers) were extremely positive about the program. All five meet as a group. appeared a little reluctant to talk until they had to answer a couple opener questions. The four teachers rated the program a-, a, a, and a. Most outstanding accomplishments of the program are: the beadwork of the students, student participation in dances and the opportunity for the teachers to get the students started right with their homework. The drug-free instruction is understood and believed effective. Drug problems are nearly non-existent with the children and about 50% of the families have alcohol problems. Problems include: for two months in the winter some children arrive home by bus after dark (so far no problems from this and it is thought to be the lessor of two evils, children arriving home without a supervisor present), craftsmen have to travel so far to the school that they want mileage paid, teachers have difficulty in obtaining "the right beads" (can not be purchased in the local area and teachers missed the purchasing opportunity) and teachers want feedback from tests and sociogram.

The 1991-1992 report for Standing Pine is as follows. I talked to the principal, two aides and three teachers concerning the program. The program involves 52 children divided into four groups. The principal reports that the program is meeting a need in the community. All four group leaders (the two aides and the two teachers) were extremely positive about the program. The staff meet as a group. The teachers and aides rated the program a-, a-, a, a, and a. Child-related drug problems are nearly non-existent, but nearly half of the families have alcohol problems. The transportation problems have been solved by taking the eight students not participating home in a van. Much better use of community resources and craftsmen are being made. School projects have focused on traditional dress. The problem with the "right-beads" persists but is less.

Red Water - In 1990-1991 project year, I talked first to the principal and then talked to three aides and one teacher while students were doing a cultural dance. The program has between 58-60 students, two teachers and three aides. The outstanding characteristics of the program were: cultural dancing and beadwork. It appears that the principal has not been supportive of the after school program during the school year. In fact, the principal stated that she felt that the program confused the children and they could not distinguish the program from regular

school. She felt that lack of discipline in the program each day was carrying over to the next morning (children will fight in after school program and then open up hostilities again in the morning). Teacher and aides all believe that the program has been a success, especially with cultural instruction. Problems noted by the teacher included: homework should be done at home (the homework part simply turns into more school work); the program needs more community support and parent participation (have trouble getting parents to spend their time at the time that the program is in operation); need beads and more time to complete teaching beadwork; need boards for instruction on making "God's Eye" craft; and there is a problem the way that the children enter the single room (lunchroom). Teachers simply turn their students out and the students arrive at the program at different times. Although drug-prevention instruction is provided, they feel that drinking among parents may be on the upswing. No substance abuse among the children, 60 to 65% parents have alcohol problems.

In 1991-1992 project year, I talked first to the new principal and then talked to three aides and two teachers. I observed two classes, interviewed a dozen students and two parents. The new principal has done a "fantastic" job renewing community interest in the school. In one of the classes that I observed, paper flowers for Memorial Day activities were being made. The students were doing a near professional job in a relaxed setting. Their taste in color combination is unique and good. A few students by choice in the class were doing beadwork. In the second supervised sports participation was taking place in the gymnasium.

The new principal is working on a plan to support locally the extension of the program to 5 p.m. to support parents wishes. Currently, the program runs until 4:30 p.m. prior to the children being bused home. No transportation problems, snack shortages, materials problems or vandalism were reported. Teachers rotate children and report that they are not as tired as last year at this time. No substance abuse among the children, about 60 of the parents have alcohol problems.

Conehatta - In 1990-1991 project year, I talked to the principal, the lead-teacher and four aides. The outstanding achievements of the program was that it provided the students with another hour and half of positive reinforcement and provided them with an opportunity to learn traditions of the culture. The program included 112 students, 4 teachers and 6 aides. The program is really needed because most of the parents work. The principal felt that the two months of dark to and from school needed to be studied. He felt that the program put pressure on the school transportation system. He was unaware that the program contributed to paying for the school transportation required by the program. He also pointed out that the program caused him to have to have two faculty meetings - one at 2:00 p.m. for the program teachers and one at 3:30 p.m. for the other teachers. The aides participating felt that the program needed: more beads

(invoicing took too long and they did not know what to anticipate as program needs); planned activities that permit the children to be outside; and more structure to what happens in the program. The lead teacher said that the program needs: a one hour per week planning time, feedback on the sociogram and more program guidance. Tobacco use is a major problem with a majority of the older students. Alcohol abuse in 70-75% of the homes. They need a list of resource people and some help in the substance abuse instruction. They feel that the homework tutoring is "good" and is "working", but they need better coordination on assignments.

In 1991-1992 project year, I talked first to the principal and then talked to three aides and two teachers. I observed two classes, interviewed a dozen students and one parent. The after school participants are divided into six classes of 12-15 students headed by one teacher and an aide. The beadwork observed in one class was excellent. In the second class study time was in session. Students were very satisfied with the program. The teachers reported a need for more drug education materials. They report that "videos" and workbooks are needed as written materials do not seem as effective as those requested. Snacks and beads were ample this year. Emphasis is still being placed on "outside" experiences such as traditional sports and homework tutoring. Tobacco use remains as a major problem with older students and adults. Alcohol abuse remains high, but has plateaued.

Tucker - In 1990-1991 project year, I talked with the principal, the lead-teacher, two aides and one teacher not involved in the after school program. The program has three teachers, three aides and about 110 students. The principal sees as strengths of the program the following: students have become more involved with cultural activities; the tutoring has helped get students doing homework on a more consistent basis; and the program has helped many parents by serving a latch key function. Problems include: the principal has had to put in some overtime for which she did not receive pay. There have been no discipline problems associated with the program. The lead-teacher believed the accomplishments of the program to include the following: the students benefit from the physical exercise, social interaction and cultural activities. During the year in the after school program the students have designed t-shirts, done beadwork, received instruction on the losses due to drug abuse and developed homework habits. The students have fun and the teachers switch program parts to keep the children's interest. The teacher rates the program at Tucker as a B. This is because she kept a group as lead-teacher for the first half of the year. In the second half of the year the lead-teacher floated and stimulated the groups. This was a better arrangement. She saw one major problem: the lead-teacher has no authority or power with staff or students. The two aides thought the program to be "good" because culture is being taught and the children and parents like it. The problem that they see is the lack of materials to make cultural artifacts. The other teacher wished for more tutoring time for the older children and science to be

taught in the program. The program did not have a bead shortage.

In 1991-1992 project year, I talked first to the acting principal and then talked to three aides and three teachers. I interviewed a half-dozen students and one parent. Tucker's program is in a transitional stage. The program will finish with 78 students, but the two group structure has been made complex by some recent decisions. Throughout the year the program operated with a three group design. Two groups, one for elementary students and one for primary students, were offered a program of arts and crafts, recreation and sports, drug and substance abuse education, snacks and some homework tutoring. Each of these groups numbered about 18 students each. A third group of 42 upper grade students were offered a program of snacks, drug and substance education, extended homework tutoring, and brief recreation and play after homework was completed. It was discovered that some of the older students were lying about completing their homework, so play privileges were removed from the group of 42, resulting in some of the older students going to the crafts group. Some problems have been reported with regard to students taking the early bus without permission. Program features some additional counseling of students.

Bogue Chitto - In 1990-1991 project year, I talked to the principal, two teachers and two aides. The lead-teacher was not available. The principal has tried to blend the activities of the after school program with the SAVE THE CHILD program and with local music instruction (choir, piano and guitar). The program has served a valuable latch key function and the homework part has served to increase achievement. The after school program has four teacher positions filled by five teachers and five aides. The program serves 110 children. The program has caused no discipline problems but has made the principal use the activity for faculty meetings and has made each meeting require two sessions. The principal feels that the program at Bogue Chitto needs one additional teacher and additional resource money. The two teachers rate the program as a B+. Both teachers praised the program in several ways. The program offers an opportunity for the children to have fun at school, to study their culture and to learn study habits by starting their homework. The aides enjoy teaching the physical activities and the cultural activities. They wish to be allowed to work the same number of hours as the teachers. Both aide and teacher meet with rather large subgroups (four).

In 1991-1992 project year, I talked to the two teachers, an aide and one parent. The principal was away on a field trip and was interviewed later by telephone. The program has 115 participants, five teachers and five aides. It was reported by the lead teacher and later confirmed by the principal that no problems were encountered by transportation and that the program ran very smoothly with regard to administration. The program featured 10 groups of students, each under the supervision of one staff member. Student groups were rotated across supervisors so that everyone got to know each other. Each group received music, drug and substance abuse education, cultural arts, recreation,

snacks and tutoring. The eighth students gained experience as aides with the younger groups. This worked out very well. The students made t-shirts and beadwork (necklaces, rings or key chains).

The teachers would be happier with the project, if they could buy their own supplies. Drug education and substance abuse materials appropriate for young children were short. Snacks were liked much better this and no troubles with transportation were reported. Alcohol abuse remains a major social problem in the community.

Choctaw Central, grades 7 & 8 - In 1990-1991 project year, I talked to the principal, two teachers and two aides. I talked with the assistant principal and the lead-teacher. The assistant principal's reaction to the program was "Great Program". He felt that the key product of the program was the tutoring and the help with homework. The other beneficial products were the latch key function served to working parents and the provision of exercise and physical education to the students. The program includes three teachers, two aides and 44 children. He would like to see the funding for materials increased and he would like to increase the time spent tutoring. There are two regular program groups and one group that is all study hall by parent request. The lead-teacher enjoyed the program and will do it again. He rates the program an A and reports that the students really like it. He believes that the program is good because of the teaching of culture and tutoring.

In 1991-1992 project year, I talked to the principal, one one aide and six parents. The program has two teachers, five aides and 28 remaining students, although at different times of the year up to 60 students have participated. It must be kept in mind that the program has to compete with several traditional school activities, such as junior varsity sports, cheerleading, band, and chorus. Parents expect this program to serve as a tutoring program to address the academic difficulties of the students. The principal is most happy with the program as it is currently configured. He is looking for a way to promote academics, but not to focus solely on homework. The "Great Books" reading program was discussed as a potential one day a week activity.

Pearl River - In 1990-1991 project year, I talked to the principal,one staff member and the lead-teacher. The program can be credited with the following achievements: it reinforces homework, it conveys the drug education message, it provides an opportunity for the students to do some needed physical education, and it sets the opportunity for the children to socialize. The program involves seven teachers, seven aides, and 261 children arranged in six groups. The lead-teacher floats and organizes. The program negatives include: staff fatigue due to oversubscription, facility deterioration, lack of control and supervision by program administration, and poor quality snacks. It is suspected that snacks are leftovers, but they should not

be. The lead-teacher reported difficulty in keeping staff. Some have reduced their time in half, putting pressure on him to keep the needed number of staff. With the size of the program someone is needed to answer the telephone. The floating method works better for the lead-teacher. He gave the program a B.

In 1991-1992 project year, I talked to the principal, four teachers including the lead teacher, three aides, fourteen students and eighteen parents at the cookout and after school program, occurring on the visit day. The program has seven teachers, seven aides and 270 remaining students. The principal reports that the program has been a real pleasure and has run smoothly. The teachers are very pleased with the administrative support, but feel that approximately forty children in a group is too many. The students like the crafts, music, and recreation time. Many of the parents are pleased with the culturally related instruction, the crafts, the music and the latch-key functions served by the program. The tutoring start given for homework is welcomed by both teachers and parents. Snacks, play, sports and socializing are enjoyed by the students. Overall, the program is big, well-liked, and making a true contribution. Staffing nor transportation have been big problems this year.

Summary of Results

In 1991-1992 project year, five of the seven schools the program appears to be implemented in "dream-like" fidelity to the model described in the funding proposal. In 1990-1991 only three schools were as well implemented. Again the keys to success in all five schools appear to be: a strong principal who is able to display confidence in the staff during the development and operation phases of the program; an energetic lead-teacher who coordinates efforts, meets deadlines and communicates; and staff that enjoy seeing students enjoy school, which could be a theme of the program. Support from parents in every community has been outstanding, but unfortunately alcohol abuse has not lessened in the communities. In one school where there is some difficulty with the program, the principal has been reassigned and the decision not to permit play needs to be re-evaluated. In the other school, age of child and competing middle school activities appear to reduce program impact by having a high degree of student migration both into and out of the program. In all seven of these schools there is strong evidence that the program is working on several dimensions. Such evidence includes: very few cases of substance abuse among the children, less gang activities and expressions of "good school attitudes."

Overall, one would have to say that the program is very effective. Impact can be viewed as an absence of problems with students who are not supervised every afternoon. Gone are the problems with transportation, snacks, shortages of many materials, and teacher turn-over. All principals like and support the program. Students like the program. Parents like the program, but wish that it could give them a little more guarantee of academic success for their children. Teachers are

more enthusiastic about working in the program.

Strengths and Weaknesses. It appears clear from the field notes for both years that the programs within each school have the strength of a good design shell. The common components of: tutoring on homework; drug education; recreation; snacks; and cultural activities are clearly the strengths of the programs. By making students feel closer to their culture, by having them enjoy school and by helping them with their homework, a true program of prevention is most likely operative. Individualized school level design appears to be both a strength and a weakness. The individualized programs are hard to manage from the project level perspective. By allowing each school to establish its own tailoring of the program, one gets a program that is highly effective at meeting the localized needs of each school. But one of the sacrifices made by individualization is the need to purchase materials for each school individually. A second sacrifice is the loss of uniformity and the ability to maximize overall project goals. In most schools the staff (especially the lead-teacher) are a strength. One must be careful not to allow the program to focus too much on homework or care of the facility or it will become more of the same rather than a preventive measure.

The great need for the program and the general applicability of it to local social problems is worth pursuit. The second year of the project shows a large increase in program understanding and management. The program affords the opportunity for people to work together for a better future.

Recommendations

1. As I did last year, I heartily recommend that the program continue and that word of its success leak out to the rest of the world.

2. Some insertion of teacher planning time should be made.

3. There seems to be different levels at which programs work with homework and those that require students to do all of their homework do not work as well as those which make certain that students can do their homework. Emphasize the latter and discourage the former. For the most part this appears to be the predominant practice.

4. Promote the "orderly fun" concept in the schools, no prevention will occur if the students do not like the program.

5. A greater emphasis on reading the classics in literature may be good rainy day fund and may serve to develop greater educational maturity.

6. More coordination is needed at two schools in the acquiring of clearinghouse materials on drug and alcohol abuse education.